

January 1991
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L. A. ARCHITECT

Wolf Prix in LA

Page 4

LA Architect's Guide
to the Landscape and
Hillside Ordinances

Page 6

Profile:
Ronald A. Altoon, FAIA

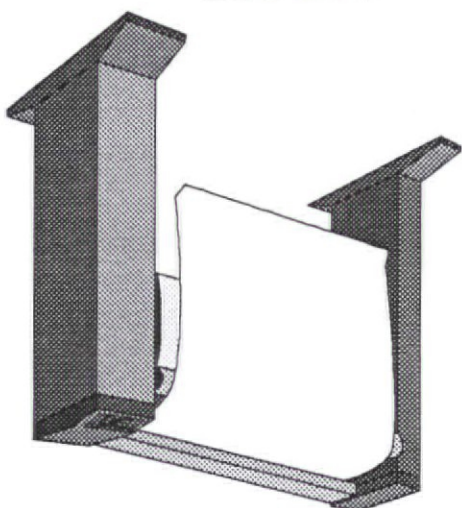
Page 3

Model, the "Open House," Malibu, Coop
Himmelfarb, 1983 (1989). (See pages 4-5.)

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New Year's Day
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National AIA ExCom Retreat
Call (213) 380-4595.

Wednesday 2

Thursday 3

ExCom Meeting
4 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Board of Directors
5:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Friday 4

Weekend

Saturday 5
Little Tokyo
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 7

M. Robert Markovich,
"Photographs: Two Architecture Projects"
Exhibit continues through January 29 at UCLA Gallery 1220. Call (213) 825-3791.
Installation Committee
3 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Tuesday 8

Wednesday 9

Thursday 10

Urban Design Committee
6 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
History of 17th-19th Century European Furniture
UCLA Extension course continues through March 21, UCLA, 148 Royce Hall, S325. Call (213) 825-9061.

Friday 11

Weekend

Saturday 12
Art Deco
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 14

Eric Zimmerman, Architectural Lighting Cathode, Inc.
Designers Lighting Forum lecture series, Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center, 6 pm. For reservations, call (213) 969-8350.

Tuesday 15

ExCom Meeting
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Wednesday 16

LA Architect Editorial Board
7:30 am. Call (213) 380-5177.
SAA Meeting
12 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Dance in the City of the Angels
Lecture sponsored by Cal Arts and the LA Festival, "Art in the Life of LA." PDC Theater, 6:30 pm. Call (805) 255-1050 ext.2120.
Environmental Resources
UCLA, 6 pm. Call (213) 825-1345 to reserve free parking.

Thursday 17

Health Committee
3:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Minority & Women Resources
6 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Acoustical Tales from a Mysterious Science
Cyril M. Harris lectures at UCLA, 7:30 pm, Perloff 1102. Call (213) 825-3791.

Friday 18

Weekend

Saturday 19
Lien Law Seminar
9 am. Call (213) 380-4595.
1991 AIA/LA Installation
Union Station. Call (213) 380-4595.
Spring Street: Palaces of Finance
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 21

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

Tuesday 22

Marketing in a Soft Economy
Panel discussion moderated by Norman Kaderlan, 4:30-6:30 pm, Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center, \$25. Call (213) 657-0800.

Wednesday 23

John Lautner
SCI-Arc lecture series, SCI-Arc Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-3482.
AIA/LA New Member Orientation
The Jerde Partnership, 5:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Thursday 24

Pro-Practice Committee
5:15 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Los Angeles AutoCad User Group
Burbank Main Library, 110 Glenoaks Boulevard. Call (818) 762-9966.

Friday 25

Fifth Annual Land Use Law and Planning Update
UCLA Extension Public Policy Program, Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza, LAX. Call (213) 825-7885.

Weekend

Saturday 26
Seventh Street: Mecca for Merchants
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

Monday 28

Tuesday 29

ExCom Meeting
4 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Board of Directors
5:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
Secrets of Dealing with Difficult Clients
Seminar moderated by Norman Kaderlan, 4:30-6:30 pm, Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center, \$25. Call (213) 657-0800.

Wednesday 30

Codes Committee
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Thursday 31

Cities Within
Franklin D. Israel lectures at UCLA, 7:30 pm, Haines Hall 39. Call (213) 825-3791.

February 1

Weekend

Saturday 2
Little Tokyo
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Terra Cotta
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 4

February 5

Pricing Your Services
Seminar moderated by Norman Kaderlan, 4:30-6:30 pm, Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center, \$25. Call (213) 657-0800.

February 6

Antoine Predock and COA (Eric Kahn, Russell Thomsen, Ron Golan)
SCI-Arc lecture series, SCI-Arc Main Space, 8 pm. Call (213) 829-3482.
Urban Innovations Group: Works in Progress
Exhibit continues through March 1 at UCLA Gallery 1220. Call (213) 825-3791.

February 7

Urban Design Committee
6 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

February 8

Weekend

Saturday 9
A Saturday with Charles Jencks and Maggie Keswick
UCLA Extension program, Four Seasons Hotel, Beverly Hills, 9:30 am-4 pm, \$150. Call (213) 825-9061.
Art Deco
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Broadway Theaters
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.
Pershing Square
LA Conservancy walking tour, 10 am.
Call (213) 623-CITY.

February 11

Costa Rica: A Natural History Expedition to the Tropics
UCLA Extension nature study tour continues through February 28, \$3315. Call (213) 825-7093.

February 12

ExCom Meeting
5 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.
The Great Balancing Act: Client Needs vs. Designer Style
Seminar moderated by Norman Kaderlan, 4:30-6:30 pm, Pacific Design Center, Blue Conference Center, \$25. Call (213) 657-0800.

Critical Mass: The Arts and Critical Commentary
Lecture sponsored by Cal Arts and the LA Festival in the continuing series, "Art in the Life of LA." PDC Theater, 6:30 pm. Call (805) 255-1050 ext.2120.

February 14

Gender, Fashion, the Construction of Modernity: From Loos to Le Corbusier
Mary McLeod lectures at UCLA, 7:30 pm, Perloff 1102. Call (213) 825-3791.

February 15

For more information on AIA/LA committee activities, contact:
Architecture for Education, Norberto R. Martinez, AIA (213) 306-4708; **Architecture for Health**, Joel Jaffe, AIA (213) 879-1474; **Awards Program**, Michael Franklin Ross, AIA (213) 826-2500; **LA Prize**, Barton Myers, AIA (213) 466-4051; **Computer Applications**, Anthony Ngai, AIA (818) 246-6050; **Historic Preservation**, Timothy John Brandt (818) 769-1486; **IDP**, Randall A. Swanson (818) 799-2070; **Interior Architecture**, Margaret Hueftle Cagle, AIA (818) 340-2887; **Large Practice**, Marvin Taff, AIA (213) 277-7405; **Liability**, William Krisel, AIA-E (213) 824-0441; **Professional Practice**, Hugh Rowland, AIA (213) 277-7405; **Programs/Professional Development**, Robert J. Anderson, AIA (213) 463-4404; **Small Projects (Practice)**, Donald C. Axon, AIA (213) 476-4593; **Architects in Education**, Lionel March (213) 661-7907;

Architects in Government, Maria Campeanu, AIA (213) 620-4517; **Architecture for Housing**, Manuel Gonzalez, AIA (213) 394-0273; **Building/Performance & Regulations**, John Petro, AIA (213) 207-8400; **Communications/Public Relations**, Michael J. Kent, AIA (213) 826-2500; **Westweek**, Frank Fitzgibbons, AIA (213) 624-8383; **LA Architect**, Arthur Golding, AIA, (213) 622-5955; **Government Relations**, Victor J. Nahmias, AIA (818) 405-6715; **International Relations/Hospitality**, Raymond Kappe, FAIA (213) 453-2643; **Licensing Task Force**, William Krisel, AIA-E (213) 824-0441; **Urban Design**, Marc Futterman; **Associates**, Robert Leach (818) 763-8676; **Real Problems Design Competition**, Steven D. Geoffrion (213) 278-1915; **Sandcastle Competition**, Andrew E. Althaus (805) 496-1101; **Student Visions for Architecture**, Jeffrey T. Sessions (213) 933-8341; **Student Visions Architects Exchange**, Mark S.

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Please contact AIA/LA at (213) 380-4595 to verify event times and dates.

The guidelines have not been finalized and the Department recognizes that projects now are being designed, in advance of publication of the guidelines, that may become available for occupancy after March 13, 1991.

Proposed guidelines published on June 15, 1990, available from HUD, state that in the interim, compliance with ANSI A117.1-1986 will meet the requirements of the Fair Housing Act in connection with the Department's investigation of any complaints.

Owner and architect should be aware that plans and/or buildings under construction may have to be revised if not "occupied" by March 13, 1991. Projects for which building permits or renewals/extensions were issued prior to January 13, 1990 are exempt.

For a copy of the "Fair Housing Guidelines: Proposed Rules," dated June 15, 1990, contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development, 451 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20410, (202) 708-0015, (202) 708-0836.

Rudolph V. DeChellis, AIA
Co-Chair, Codes Committee

Architectural Administrators Unite

A dozen architectural administrators from the Los Angeles area will join the Society of Architectural Administrators (SAA) this month. The SAA is affiliated with the AIA nationally. It is recognized through this bond that the organizations share objectives consistent with the goal of improving the architectural profession as well as strengthening each group.

These administrators have been meeting since February of last year to exchange ideas and information, share resumes, and further educate themselves through seminars and guest speakers. If you are interested in taking advantage of a large network of your colleagues and associates, please contact Julie Robison (213) 939-1900.

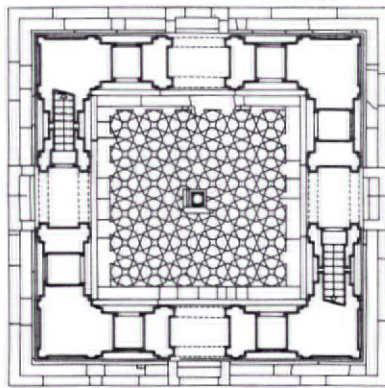
Stamp Required

Effective January 1, 1991, architects will be required to stamp plans, specifications and other instruments of service when submitting them to a governmental body. This change to the Architects Practice Act resulted from legislation sponsored by the California Board of Architectural Examiners, AB 1005 (Chapter 94, Statutes of 1990).

The law specifies that the architect's stamp contain (1) the legend "State of California," (2) the term "licensed architect," (3) the architect's name (as licensed with the board), (4) the architect's license number, and (5) a means for noting the renewal date for the current license (last day of birth month and year). The renewal date may be hand written or typeset. The typeset version will require replacement every two years.

The architect's signature is still required on documents submitted to building officials. Both the imprint of the stamp (and written renewal date when using stamp with blank) and a signature constitute compliance with law.

CBAE anticipates adoption of regulations regarding the shape and size of the stamp. We recommend a 1" minimum-2" maximum diameter circular shape. The design of the circle may include solid lines (thin or thick) or broken lines, such as dashes or dots. Other possibilities include a rope or beaded effect or words forming the circle. Embellishments (stars, graphic designs) are also acceptable so long as the stamp is legible. The stamp shall not be of the embossing type. For additional information, call (916) 445-3394.



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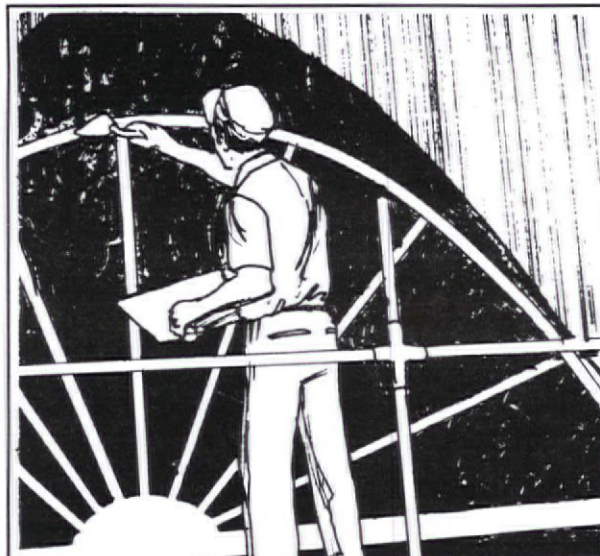
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logical results. The ordinance is based on a thorough review of available scientific literature on the ecological effects of planting. However, the amount of planting required is not directly calibrated to implement specific levels of oxygen production, energy use and other factors. Therefore we do not have a means of analyzing whether the amount of planting proposed is adequate to meet the ecological need.

Why these significant omissions? The ordinance is canny, ambitious and political, if politics is the art of the possible. Omissions or lack of emphasis are not because a broader range of concerns was not considered important. Rather, the ordinance deals with those elements of the urban/environmental design agenda which are most readily approvable at this point in time--requirements are based on ecological as distinguished from aesthetic and urban design needs.

The ordinance had to be designed to elicit consensus from a wide range of publics, including the landscape construction industry, environmental designers, internal city departments, and City Council. As such, the ordinance forswears directly addressing such currently verboten subjects as aesthetics and urban design. Further, the ordinance does not directly tread on some of the regulatory/bureaucratic territory claimed by other city departments, such as the design of street sections. The limited range of issues the document considers also reflects the limited resources the city is willing to put into the effort. At this stage, the highly refined draft reflects a considerable amount of thought and review over a period of two years by city departments, outside professionals, the business community, and the strong personal commitment and openness of its primary author, Michael O'Brien, ASLA.

Substantively, the ordinance is based on the legitimate assumption of first things first: if ecological issues aren't addressed, we won't have a city and an environment in which to consider aesthetics and urban design. Scientifically, the ordinance's author concluded that there is not sufficient valid

scientific information about the interaction of foliage, hardscape and environmental quality to make a direct correspondence between the amount of planting and a desired environmental result. Biomass theories which do address these questions are too complex to implement at this point in a workable public ordinance.

Impacts on Design Professionals

The ordinance will impact our daily practice. First we will have to learn the requirements--a daunting task at first due to the ordinance's length, but not difficult, particularly since all related landscape regulations will be aggregated into a single code section. The scope of our work will increase. In addition to the required amount of landscaping, for the first time virtually all commercial and industrial projects as well as parking lots must be landscaped.

Requirements for documenting the project's landscaping and irrigation may create an additional source of work for architects and landscape architects. The strong emphasis on conserving native and natural plant materials, as well as the requirements for shading the western and southern faces of buildings, will impact site and building design. Requirements for a base level of landscaping will force a readjustment in the way that building construction costs are budgeted. A certain minimum level of landscaping must be provided before a building permit and certificate of occupancy is granted; this landscaping may no longer be eliminated in order to reduce the total project costs. The ordinance gives the designer more control over the ultimate installation of the landscape through its requirement for a Certificate of Substantial Completion of the landscape before the city will issue a Certificate of Occupancy.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Despite the political logic described above, the ordinance's ecological basis can and should be legitimately expanded to incorporate urban design issues and to embrace the public realm. The upcoming joint review of the ordinance by the AIA Urban Design Committee and the ASLA will be an opportunity to test this belief. Issues which

this review should address include critiques listed above.

This effort should result in an ordinance which addresses the full range of issues. Anything less may be a bow to political expediency but simply won't do the job. Suggested changes, however, should attempt to retain the simplicity, practicality, and political effectiveness of the current draft. It may well be that some of the urban design issues raised cannot be accommodated within the confines of a landscape ordinance but must become incorporated in other vehicles--potentially an urban design element of the city's General Plan of which landscape is a subset and is implemented within the Community Plans and related Specific Plan. Perhaps additional ordinances are also needed.

Ben Rosenbloom, AIA

Mr. Rosenbloom is the principal of Rosenbloom Associates.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE, continued from 6

however in the hillside landscape, this concern usually means that no house should be planned with more than one story above the high point of the street facade. With a little imagination, one could develop a plan that runs down the hillside to provide more livable space for the homeowners, thereby creating a number of exciting solutions to the need for more square footage.

Attention is paid to the use of color and materials for roof and wall finishes, to the landscaping and use of fencing materials. There are concerns for clean, simple lines and for organized glass areas that are undivided, as well as the prevention of "skylare" from skylights, and for the visual control of service areas, air conditioners, and pool equipment.

The years of use of the guidelines for Crestwood Hills have strengthened and developed these criteria and should prove a valuable tool for other communities. The forethought--and foresight--of the original architects of Crestwood Hills provided a vision for the community to build upon. It

would be nice if our city fathers could find the time--and the smarts--to do the same for Los Angeles.

Donald C. Axon, AIA

Mr. Axon is the principal of DCA, AIA, Inc. and is a past president of AIA/LA.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE, continued from 7


In view of the project's ambitious if narrow scope and COTE's limited resources, the initial publication date slated for the end of 1991 may be overly optimistic. Yet at a time when recent experiences with asbestos abatement have made architects wary about "the next new toxic to be discovered," COTE's efforts are timely to say the least. At another level, broad public awareness of environmental concerns has spawned a spate of products both at the consumer and construction industry levels, with wide-ranging claims of environmental compatibility. The profession has had a decade and a half of experience with similar claims for products promising energy-responsiveness. This second level of involvement should also eventually be a part of the ERG and it should build upon that earlier experience.

The long experience of architects involved in energy with those earlier claims on behalf of materials, products, and systems and the role that experience should play in any expanded scope of environmental considerations, will be a subject of discussion for the AIA/LA Environmental Resources Committee, as will the broader growth and environment issues noted above. *LA Architect* readers interested in participating in the work of the committee are invited to attend its 1991 agenda-setting meeting on January 16 at the UCLA Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. See this month's calendar, and call me at (213) 825-1345 at least 24 hours in advance in order to reserve parking.

Richard Schoen, FAIA

Mr. Schoen is chair of the AIA/LA Environmental Resources Committee.

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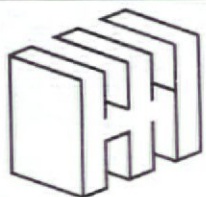
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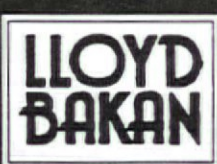
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Fire Sprinkler--Required for all new construction. Retrofitting of entire existing structure is required in cases where a rehab increases the existing building square footage by more than 50%.

Criticism and Recommendations

In addition to the ordinance's stated goals of controlling over-development and increasing fire safety, the AIA/LA task force is recommending the following goals: encourage environmentally sensitive development; encourage development compatible in scale and character with the best of existing hillside residences; and encourage aesthetically pleasing development.

The primary environmental problem is the required 24 foot wide street and 30 foot wide right-of-way. Combined with the five foot front yard setback, this will require extensive grading and construction of high retaining walls. The resultant street space is more consistent with subdivision development than the intimate character of the hillside. The task force is recommending 20 foot wide streets (the minimum recommended by the fire department) with additional street width at specific locations.

The 36 foot height limit will encourage flat-roofed, stepped buildings. Sloping roofs and architectural roof projections will be difficult to achieve. The vertical designs of the classical hillside homes, revered by hillside residents and architects, will be all but impossible to build. The 66.7% cut-off slope for 45 foot height is too abrupt and does not recognize that slightly shallower slopes have essentially the same problems as the 66.7% slope. The task force is recommending that height restrictions be adjusted according to the slope by using a sliding scale. It is also recommending that

the ordinance allow uninhabited architectural roof projects up to 6 feet high.

Consistent with its concern for encouraging good architecture, the task force is recommending that front and side walls be modulated by requiring average setbacks. It also recommends walls on the downhill side of down-sloped lots should be covered with landscaping so that no more than 12 feet of wall is exposed.

Discussion

The commonly held belief that most of the unappetizing hillside construction of the recent five years is due to developer greed does not recognize the part that existing height restrictions have played. The boxy, flat roofed architecture that is common to new construction in the hillsides owes much of its existence to current height restrictions which make it almost impossible to design interesting roof architecture. The more restrictive height proposed in the ordinance will only make it worse.

Much of the impetus for the height restrictions appears to be political, based on the politicians' perception that the public equates lower height with better looking, smaller-scaled buildings. While this may be true on flatland, reducing height limits on hillsides simply spreads a building out horizontally and removes roof articulation. It is highly questionable that a stepped, horizontal building is actually seen as a less obtrusive mass than a vertical building of the same overall height when the angle of the hillside is taken into consideration. The height restrictions amount to de-facto style control as the vertical massing and sloped roofs characteristic of older revival styles would be discouraged in favor of the stepped massing and flat roofs of modern style. As the revival styles appear to be the style of preference for hillside residents (since they tend to be similar to the older existing houses), the ordinance essentially discourages the very design residents prefer.

The most charming feature about existing hillside development is its intimate, small scale. Prospects for maintaining that scale are jeopardized by the ordinance's excessive street width requirements. The ordinance's

flexibility is dependent on the Bureau of Engineering, which typically requires the maximum allowable street width. Street improvement guidelines should have built-in environmental sensitivity.

Some of the inadequacies of this ordinance result from the lack of architects' structured participation in the preparation process. Planners are not architects, and do not have the ability to project environmental and architectural impacts, nor do they have the technical expertise to judge the practicality of the requirements.

It is rumored that council members will attempt to impose a 36 foot high limit on all hillside construction, regardless of the slope of the site, and that they will also increase the road widths to 28 feet with 36 foot right of ways. These two proposals will only exacerbate the ordinance's existing problems.

It is not too late to correct the deficiencies. Gaining fire truck access and bulk control does not have to mean losing environmental and architectural quality. The politics of design must be linked to the realities of design.

We urge architects who are concerned about this situation to write their council offices. If enough architects object to the ordinance, it will be changed. Councilpersons Michael Woo, Gloria Molina, John Ferraro, Zev Yaroslavsky and Ruth Galanter can be written reached at: 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Congressman Henry Waxman can be written to at: 8425 W. Third Street, #400, Los Angeles, CA 90048.

Bruce Sternberg, AIA

Mr. Sternberg is chair of the AIA/LA Hillside Ordinance Task Force.

LANDSCAPE ORDINANCE, continued from 7

implicit and even more far-ranging agenda. One is creating and conserving an "urban forest," a consciously-defined entity with its own structure and form, a major factor in establishing the character of the public realm. Another is increasing the poetic and

aesthetic elements in the city, an aspect not directly addressed by the ordinance but a real effect of the regulations. In addition, the ordinance is a key building block of the city's necessary but currently non-existent urban design policy--a "foot in the door" which will later open up opportunities for a more complete and direct approach to an adopted policy.

Critique

In its present form, the draft responds primarily to an ecological rather than aesthetic/urban design imperative. This gives rise to at least four major limitations.

The ordinance is not an urban design or visual design document. What it doesn't address in detail or at all reads like an urban design textbook: protection of all significant ridgelines, control of maximum allowable cut heights, location of buildings on hillside building pads, protection of viewsheds through location and type of landscaping, location and size of open space, streetscape design and street tree planning, the need for new standard street sections and streetscape standards, and review of city standards for the spacing of lighting standards and trees. Qualitative standards for the design of landscape, hardscape and open space are largely omitted.

The ordinance is not a manifesto for expanding the amount of open space. The call and means for increasing the quantity of public open space is not addressed. The quality of open space, however, is affected by the ordinance's minimum requirements for open space landscaping.

The ordinance is not based on a plan which integrates ecology, land use, landscape, and urban design. Such a plan does not now exist. Rather, the ordinance was written in response to a set of mayoral directives. It relates to and is triggered only by applications for a building permit, not addressing larger issues of linkages between projects and landscaping of the urban public realm.

The ordinance does not provide a basis for measuring a relationship between quantity and type of planting and specified eco-



PERRIS • CIVIC • CENTER
DESIGN COMPETITION

Located in the Inland Empire of California, Perris is a rapidly developing city with a population of 25,000 that is projected to grow to a population of 150,000 by the year 2010. To provide municipal services for the expanding urban area, to create a center of civic activity, and to promote a new image reflecting the pride and visionary thinking of its citizenry, the City of Perris wishes to undertake a design competition for its Civic Center for the purpose of selecting an overall design concept and an architect/landscape architect team to undertake a phased building program.

The Perris Civic Center will include new buildings in conjunction with reuse of current structures. The 16-acre site will eventually contain approximately 200,000 square feet of buildings for City Hall functions, City departments and agencies, police department and civic facilities with parking, parks and gardens.

The City of Perris is seeking collaborating teams of architects and landscape architects interested in providing design services for the new Civic Center. The design competition will be a three-phase process, as follows:

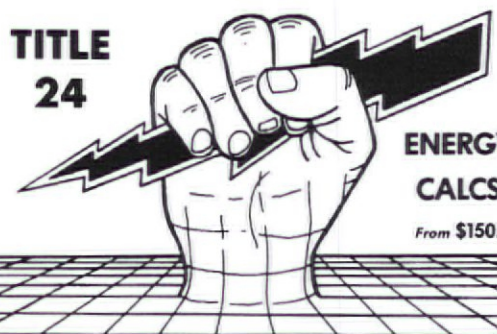
- I. Submittal of Qualifications and Statement of Design Intent (due 2/15/91).
- II. Selection of Competitors (three to five teams will be invited to participate in the Design Competition).
- III. Design Competition (90-day period for preparation and presentation of a design.).

Those teams selected to participate in Phase III will be paid an honorarium of \$10,000 each. Competition packets and submittal requirements are available by written request only to:

Mr. Donald J. Stastny, AIA AICP
Professional Advisor
Perris Civic Center Design Competition
c/o City Manager's Office
101 North "D" Street
Perris California 92370

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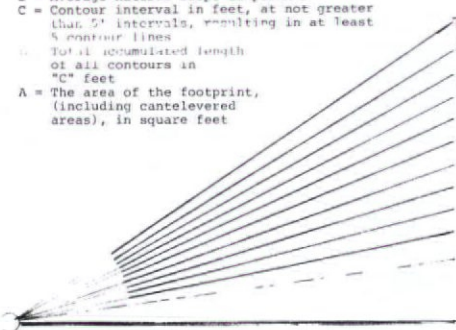
Los Angeles as Garden City: Looking at the Landscape Ordinance

AVERAGE NATURAL LOT SLOPE

$$S = \frac{C \times L}{A} \times 100$$

Where:

S = Average natural slope in percent
C = Contour interval in feet, at not greater than 5' intervals, resulting in at least 5 contour lines
L = Total accumulated length of all contours in "C" feet
A = The area of the footprint, (including cantilevered areas), in square feet



Allowable height above grade measured parallel to the slope.

65%	45'
60%	44'
55%	43'
50%	42'
45%	41'
40%	40'
35%	39'
30%	38'
25%	37'
20%	36'
14%	36'

Minimum slope for "L" side classification



The Ordinance on Paper

In response to a request by Mayor Bradley, the City Planning Department, in cooperation with the Los Angeles Section of ASLA, is developing a landscape ordinance for the city. In his request, the Mayor asked that the ordinance address issues such as air pollution, noise and glare abatement, mitigation of the urban heat island, uniform parking standards, and reorganization of Municipal Code sections relating to landscape. Draft "L" of the ordinance will appear about January 1.

The ordinance will apply to any "project," which is almost everything over 500 square feet. It will apply not only to residential construction, but also to commercial and industrial construction, and parking lots. The ordinance should go into effect no earlier than late 1991, and plans submitted before that date will be for the most part exempt.

So where would this new ordinance leave the architect? One, it reverses the trend to restrict landscape submittals to landscape architects. The ordinance allows architects to make any submittals that they are licensed to do. Two it aggregates into one section of the Zoning Code all landscape requirements, so that they are easily findable. Three, it makes all landscape submittals ministerial, except in projects that are already discretionary. Landscape plan check will work like Xeriscape currently works--an over the counter sign-off.

Four, in those cases where the architect has a Better Idea, he or she can submit an Alternative Landscape Betterment Plan, which is intended to suspend the precise requirements of the landscape ordinance, so long as the plan fulfills the ordinance's intent. It is discretionary, but it must be approved or disapproved within 20 days, or it gets automatic approval. Five, the draft ordinance leaves various avenues open for the designer to create the most appropriate design, by providing a menu of design features and techniques that the architect can choose from on his project, much like the current Xeriscape ordinance works. The menu also acts as a brake on City Planning's discretionary authority.

The ordinance packet is quite large--over 100 pages--and people ask why it has to be so long. The answer is simple. The ordinance is ministerial, and there have to be specific, countable criteria to make a ministerial ordinance work. In the packet, you will find *all* of the criteria that will be applied to your submittal--no "as determined

by City Planning" wording that leaves the applicant more confused than enlightened. The Ordinance Committee plans to have all guidelines and submittal forms created before sending the ordinance for City Council approval.

Some of the major features of the draft ordinance that will be of interest to architects are the following. Requirements for parking lot landscaping have been considerably strengthened, so that in all projects they are about the same as those in the current Mini-Mall Ordinance: one tree per each 25 feet of frontage (which must be coordinated with any signage), one tree per each four parking spaces (and tree location must be coordinated with lighting), and the area under bumper overhangs must be landscaped. All of this holds true even for parking lots on slab (but not parking structures).

For most multi-family dwellings, 100 square feet of usable open space per unit must be provided. This must be outdoors--recreation rooms can no longer be counted--it must be landscaped, and the front setback can't be counted in your open space requirement. There are exceptions for mixed-use projects.

All buildings must be shaded on the south and west sides, which means that adequate space must be left in the site plan for shading devices such as trees.

There are other requirements, including extensive provisions for conservation of native trees and for protection of wildlands, that are too lengthy to summarize here. What the draft ordinance does *not* regulate for the most part is aesthetics, since the architect is best qualified to make aesthetic judgments, and not some bureaucrat. To receive the current ordinance packet, call (213) 485-3402. The ordinance is still in process, and we need your comments to make sure that it does not unnecessarily restrict what you do best--design.

Michael O'Brien, ASLA

Mr. O'Brien is the primary author of the Landscape Ordinance.

The Ordinance in Practice

The City's draft landscape ordinance is a significant initiative which uses future landscaping within the city to further critical environmental goals. However, other intentions can be read into this serious document--giving the ordinance an

Continued on 8

AIA Environment Committee Meets with Ambitious But Narrow Agenda

The AIA National Committee on the Environment (COTE) held its first open meeting on November 13, 1990, in Washington, DC. The one-day meeting was largely devoted to a symposium, "Crossroads, Architects and the Environment," with several key speakers. But the nearterm focus of the committee's work can be found in the draft of the Environmental Resource Guide (ERG) which it is charged with creating.

Participants in the meeting became de facto committee members, volunteering to work on task forces whose charges roughly coincided with sections of the guide: site planning, materials selection, energy requirements, energy conservation and recycling, waste, and air quality. There were also working groups on education and the rainforest, the latter chaired by committee consultant and AIA/LA member, Frederick P. Lyman.

The need for a resource guide was established

by passage of the "Critical Planet Rescue" resolution at the 1989 St. Louis AIA National Convention. Subsequent National AIA Board of Directors actions first established both AIA and Scientific Advisory steering groups and then approved the formation of the committee on the environment. Sponsor of the original resolution and steering committee/COTE chair is Robert J. Birkenbile, FAIA, of Kansas City.

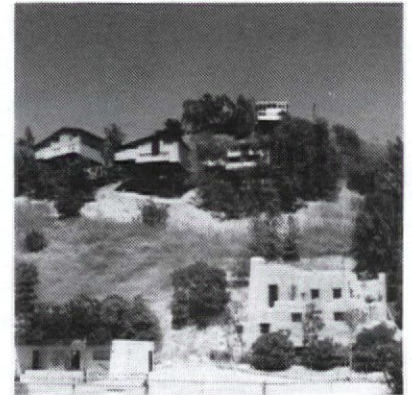
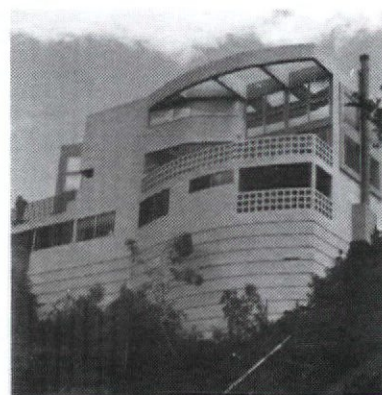
The ERG is intended to be "a document that will enable architects, engineers, and other designers to make well-informed decisions about the environmental impact of materials they specify in construction projects. The ERG will also summarize the most recent scientific research on siting, waste, air quality, and energy." Indeed with established researcher-practitioners such as Greg Franta, AIA in energy, and indoor-air quality expert Hal Levin heading the Air Quality

workgroup, those other areas will doubtless receive the benefit of long experience in their respective fields. Nonetheless, potentially toxic or otherwise environmentally harmful construction materials appear to be the initial focus. In part, this may stem from the thrust of the original resolution and the funding in this area made available to the AIA by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

In selecting materials for a particular project, the guide recognizes that architects consider "cost, aesthetics, availability, durability, maintenance, manufacturer's reputation, and code compliance" (and more). To those considerations, the ERG seeks to add "short and long-term toxic effects; life-cycle costs and impacts; synergistic compound effects; and available alternatives." Moreover, it plans to do this by taking a cradle-to-grave approach, expanding on earlier work by the

late Richard Stein, FAIA, Diane Serber and others, in determining the "embodied energy" in a material from extraction of its original constituents to final salvage or disposal when a building is demolished. It hopes to include all potentially environmentally-adverse effects of a materials's use over that life-cycle. It expects eventually to develop that level of information about materials in all 16 CSI/MASTERSPEC categories in two formats: loose-leaf binder and retrievable computer diskettes. This is enormously ambitious, even though the ERG will not involve original research by the AIA, but will draw on material and data from the EPA and other sources. However, in some areas there is little information and in the case of other materials, research that is available will more often than not have to be reconstituted in a format more directly useful to the design professions.

Continued on 9



A House in the Hills: The Dream Reconsidered

A proposed citywide Hillside Ordinance (CPC 90-0235 CA), designed to control development in Los Angeles hillsides, has been working its way through City Hall this past year. It is as much a political gesture as a development control document and it will have significant impacts for architects and for the environment of the hillsides. The AIA/LA task force formed to address it fears that some of those impacts could be environmentally and architecturally harmful.

In general the proposed ordinance will reduce building bulk, provide for construction of new streets adjacent to new construction, increase parking requirements, require sewer connections, improve grading control, and require fire sprinklers for all new construction.

Background

Years of lobbying by hillside residents to control over-development and improve fire truck access resulted in the passage of a series of localized Interim Control Ordinances in 1988 and 1989. Politically, these interim ordinances provided a mechanism for councilpersons to garner affluent hillside resident support. Legally, they reduced the liabilities facing the city which had for years neglected the fire truck access and infrastructure problems in the hillsides. The proposed citywide ordinance will replace the various interim ordinances.

The Nuances of Hillside Development

Existing hillside development in most of Los Angeles is characterized by narrow winding streets, often less than 16 feet wide, constructed prior to World War II. Most of these streets do not have sidewalks, and some do not have concrete curbs. Often the paved streets terminate in dirt roads. Previous to the passage of the interim ordinances, the city was not requiring improvement of dirt roads, even where new construction occurred.

Most of the hillsides are completely developed with older housing that tends to be small (less than 2000 square feet is not unusual). Most new construction has occurred at the end of roads or on infill lots and has tended to be larger than 2500 square feet.

Construction in the hillsides is very expensive due to the foundations. Caissons are usually required. The design of hillside housing under present code requires more than normal juggling of plan, section, and elevations in order to fit a building on a steeply sloping site within the height envelope allowed. Generally houses are con-

structed as close as possible to the streets to keep retaining walls as low as possible. Designs are typically modern style, flat-roofed, rectangular in plan, and boxy in appearance in response to the high cost of hillside construction and the height restrictions.

Process

Architectural input on the ordinance thus far has been limited to informal discussion with planning staff and public comment at Planning Commission meetings. There are no architects on the ordinance preparation team, although our informal input has provided a major portion of the technical design information used by the Planning Department to prepare the ordinance. However, since we are treated as merely one of many interested parties, our input is only selectively included in the ordinance.

Ordinance Highlights

The ordinance requirements apply to all new construction and, with a few exceptions, to additions of 500 square feet or more. Highlights of the ordinance are:

Setbacks--a minimum front yard setback of five feet for garages and main buildings. Sideyards are a minimum of five feet with increases of one foot for every additional ten feet over 18 feet.

Height--a maximum height of 36 feet measured along a line parallel to the slope for buildings on slopes which do not exceed 1:5/1 (66.7%). The maximum height for buildings on slopes in excess of 66.7% shall be 45 feet, also measured parallel to the slope. Maximum height at the front property line shall be 24 feet for a depth of five feet on slopes which exceed 14.3%.

Lot Coverage--a maximum of 40% of the lot may be covered by the building (including the garage).

Street Improvements--A 15 foot half-street dedication and a 12 foot half-street improvement is required for all new construction which does not front on a 24 foot wide street (called a Standard Hillside Street). Street improvements less than described above will be acceptable with City Engineer approval. Owners of buildings or additions constructed after the effective date of the ordinance shall agree to join an assessment district to improve fire safety.

Parking--two covered parking spaces are required for up to 2400 square feet of house. One additional space is required for every 1000 square feet of additional square feet, up to a maximum of three additional spaces. The additional spaces

Continued on 8

Upper left: Hillside Ordinance setback diagrams; upper right: hillside slope calculation chart (diagrams courtesy of Bruce Sternberg); lower left: 900 Hanley Avenue, Crestwood Hills, Whitney R. Smith and A. Quincy Jones, architects, and Edgardo Contini, engineer; lower right: Edgardo Contini, A. Quincy Jones and Whitney R. Smith at the Mutual Housing Association site office under construction (photos by Emiel Beeksky, courtesy of Elaine Jones); bottom left: typical hillside street width; bottom right: 28' wide street (photos courtesy of Bruce Sternberg).

AVERAGE SETBACK FROM PROPERTY LINE

Area A ≤ Area B

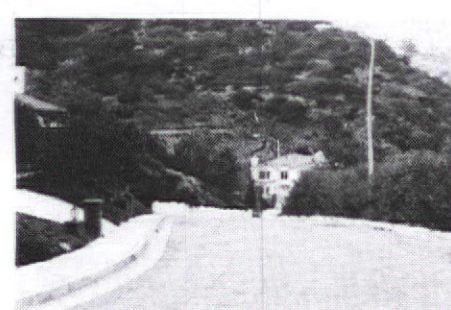
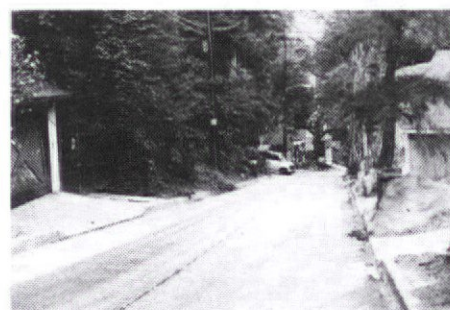
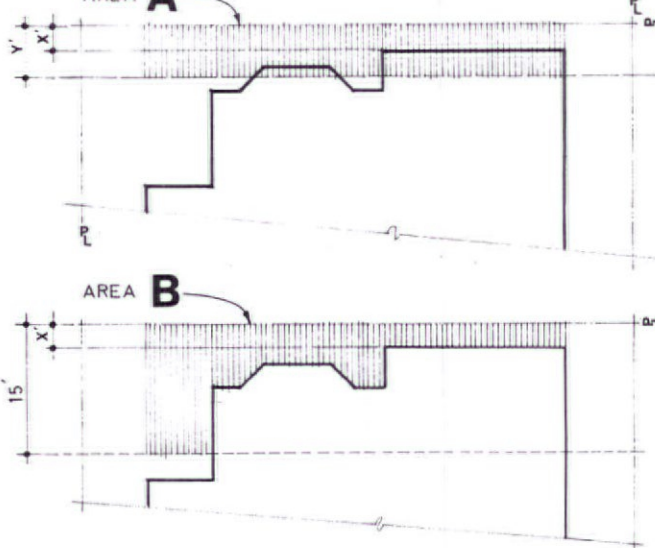
Where:

X = Minimum allowable setback

Y = Average allowable setback

15' = Maximum distance which may be used for making calcs. (For purposes of calculating, setbacks greater than 15' will be considered to be 15'.)

* Frontyard and sideyard setbacks are calculated the same way.



Designing Hillside Houses: An Historical Perspective

The design of hillside houses, particularly in the Los Angeles area, offers architects some unusual opportunities to stretch their design imagination and environmental consciousness. The designer is not only presented with the engineering considerations associated with tough geologic concerns, but also with those that come with new arrangements of the traditional home plan.

Designing for the hillside setting has been with us for hundreds of years although, traditionally, home sites have been selected on relatively flat terrain. There was always the desire to build on high ground to avoid the "public health" type issues associated with low land: bad water, bad drainage, insects and bad air. Italian cities such as Assisi, Siena and San Marino are a good example of early construction on steep slopes. In most of these towns, the attempt to build on sloping ground probably had a lot to do with de-

fense or the desire to save level ground for farming.

In the United States, the move to build on hillsides began sometime around the middle of the 19th century, and in Los Angeles it began sometime after the 1900s. In the early years, most of the city was confined to the more level areas. A good example of post World War II "communal" housing is the community of Crestwood Hills which began as "Mutual Housing." Three young members of the LA Symphony were looking for affordable housing after their return from the war, and found what was then cheap land in the Santa Monica Mountains. An association was formed and many young families signed up to be a part of this move to create housing that could sustain their new, growing families at a price that they could afford.

One of the best moves that they made early on was to hire three young design professionals who themselves were just starting their professional

careers, and who had the imagination and the talent to pull off this assignment: A. Quincy Jones, Edgardo Contini and Whitney Smith. The rest is history, and this 350 family community still operates as a community homeowners group with a board of directors, a nursery school, a community park and an architectural review committee that is empowered to approve the exterior design of each house. Obviously, in the last nearly 50 years, there have been abuses of the guidelines that were established by the original architects, but those guidelines proved to be so beneficial to the community that they have been legally extended until the year 2025.

The Crestwood Hills Architectural Committee's statement of policy is a direct descendent of the founding fathers' guidelines, and the only changes over the years have been for clarification or to adjust to new circumstance. They have

been tested time and again in the courts and have on each occasion been upheld. One good reason for their success is that they are not punitive, but are in fact very fair.

The CHAC statement of policy addresses those very issues that make planning in the hillsides so creative. They seek to avoid harsh contrasts in the visual perception of the community; too promulgate careful design so that there is harmony between the buildings and their sites; and seek to maintain building forms which become part of the terrain without commanding attention. The guidelines also seek to provide that concerns for overall size, scale and locations of the homes are directly related to the nature of the terrain, and that "primary views" of neighboring homes shall be considered in each review.

Two story homes are not generally approved,

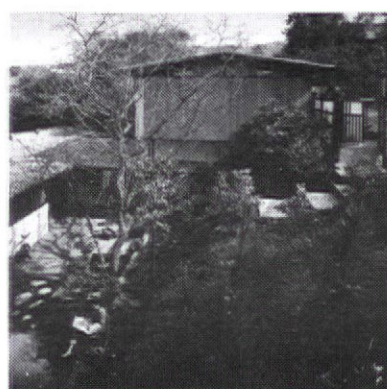
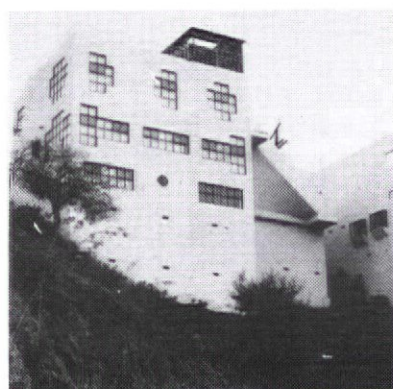
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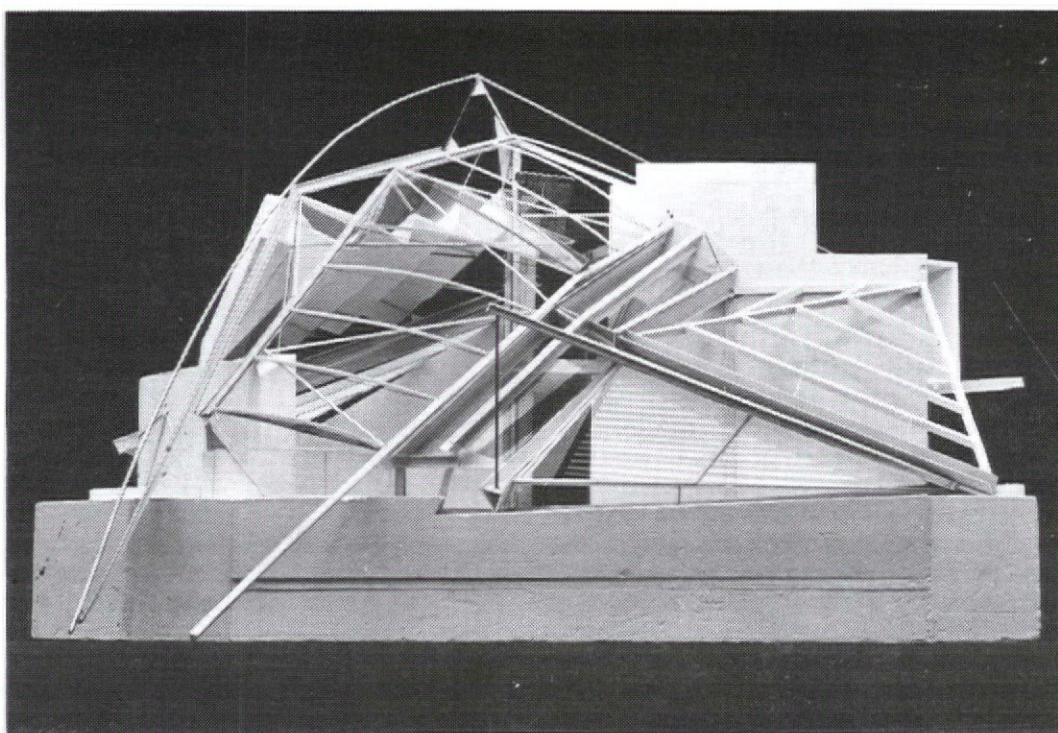
The Reality of the Dream: A Readers' Poll

LA Architect offers its readers the chance to rate the following hillside projects observed around Los Angeles. Note: most of these projects exceed massing and setback requirements specified in the proposed Hillside Ordinance.

- A - "Looks great; I hope my neighbor builds it."
- B - "I wish it were cantilevered over my house."
- C - "Rapes and pillages the landscape."
- D - "Respects existing neighborhood/landscape conditions."
- E - "They don't make them like they used to."

(Write in comments are also acceptable. Send comments to: LA Architect, 3780 Wilshire Bl. #900, Los Angeles, CA 90010.) Photos generously donated by Elaine Jones, Julius Shulman, Randy Jacobson, and Bruce Sternberg.





Clockwise from lower left: perspective photomontage, Ronacher Theatre Complex, Vienna, 1987; model, Rehak House, Malibu, 1990; model, Rooftop Remodelling, Vienna, 1984-1989; map of Melun-Senart and Environs, first prize, international town planning competition, 1987.

Michael Rotondi said that when he saw the Rooftop in Vienna, he was struck by the tension between old and new, and his question was whether we can get the same power in LA because we have nothing to fight against. My answer is we have a lot to fight for--we never fight against something, we always fight for something. And if there is something in our way like part of an old villa, we remove it. If nothing is in our way, we create our environment. I would prefer it if we could do that in Vienna, but it happens there is a lot of old stuff standing around that you have to deal with. I feel very free in Los Angeles, and I think that we'll create a new kind of power which can't be read by the model--you have to step inside.

I'm curious about this Vienna connection because I think of Schindler--50 years ago he eliminated the distinction between inside and outside space but within the confines of the Cartesian box.

Cartesian box? In every office I hear cartesian grid, cartesian box! You guys don't know what it is! You don't have to suffer with it. You just try to create this grid order, I don't know why. You should be happy you don't have to deal with that. No! Everybody wants to have a cartesian grid, cartesian box.

Now 50 years later here comes Coop-Himmelblau to Los Angeles with its concepts of an open architecture which has gone further to free us from the box, gravity, and the static elements of architecture.

Yeah, I would love to but we are not preachers, coming to a city like LA, and floating a half meter over the city, saying "look at us, I tell you, you should get rid of the Cartesian box..." No, this is just another challenge to create, to respond in a certain way to a new environment. I'm very impressed by the light. I never had such a light in Vienna, so this is the challenge we have to play with. Maybe it looks like that we want to bring something to Los Angeles, but it's here, I think it's all here...

Looking through the chronology of your projects, looking at the pneumatic structures of the 1960s and 1970s, it seems that you are trying to do the same things now but within conventional means of building. You are trying to free the building. Whether it's through the Rehak House or the Open House, it seems to be a cycle that is coming around.

Yes, I think that you're right. We are doing a lot of buildings with x's. This office building is a loft building suspended between two x's. And the movable thing is not an invention of ours--Archigram did it with moveable, walking cities. There are basic lines which sometimes are hidden in our work, concerning content, program, structure, light and space, which are sometimes very important for us. Basically, we are much more interested in the program,



and its content, what's going on inside the box, so it comes up in the Open House, and Villa Rosa, not so far away from the Open House. You call it conventional architecture or normal means of construction because now we have the commission to do it...

I think we should talk about the design strategy, which I think is misunderstood. The only thing we try to do is bring emotion back to architecture. In the moment of design, we don't care too much about anything else--we are going right to the point of what we want to have, and afterwards we clarify it by rationalizing structural means and things like that. If we look at the Rehak house, there is a basic concept to separate kids and parents, and give them space in between, so they can meet whenever they meet. There are a lot of rational issues in this project, but the first approach was to do an x on a hill. Working with subconscious things enables us to break borderlines which are seemingly very strong.

From that initial response sketch, is there an understanding of how the entire process works?

People like students think that this is easy, that I just make a scribble and that's it. We can organize everything into this sketch because we trained, we practiced it a long time. The sketch can be blown up to the right scale and it turns out everything fits, even the proportion of the spaces, without thinking about that. Of course this is a very Viennian thing, working with subconscious, being very emotional about architecture, but how do you get the feeling of space rationally?

I always say to students, if the piece doesn't speak for itself, it's lost, because you are not able to stand there and explain to everyone what the concept is, it has to

come out by itself. Nothing is more boring than just one level. Nothing is more boring than pretending intellectual explanation. Of course, therefore most architecture is very boring.

How have your experiences in LA, and teaching at SCI-Arc, affected you?

I really can't tell right now, but I can see that something is changing because, of course, we are influenced by the environment, talking to American architects, getting close to American architecture. Looking at the Open House and the Melrose project, the change is in terms of vocabulary, material, in terms of explaining it. We are not Viennese architects anymore, we are in between.

I think the loft building came into our minds in New York 20 years ago. We thought, this is a good fabric for the city, because we don't have to destroy the buildings, we can remodel them from the inside.

We refused to do apartment buildings or single family residences because we were afraid to determine the client too much, so this was a very logical development, taking loft buildings, and breaking them up until they evolved into the Open House. So you could take the Hot Flat building, which is an apartment building where the arrow goes through, and break it up till it's more broken, more broken, more broken, until it becomes an open space, like the Open House or the Rooftop. People say we are very aggressive, we destroy things. We never destroy things, we just open them up for new things.

What about Coop-Himmelblau's objectives to realize the concepts introduced by Ron Herring or Peter Cook?

Himmelblau keeps the promise others gave 20 years before. The bigger the project is, the more you get into politics, and the more you have to be very careful about how to deal with things. That doesn't mean getting obedient; the challenge is in not being very obedient. For example, we got a commission to do the first highrise in Vienna, so we had to change the codes. We did a study for the city about which Viennese building codes had to be changed in order to build the highrise.

I think the cleverness of future architects should be not to follow codes but to figure out how to break codes, unreasonable codes that derive from aesthetical and preservation reasons in order to preserve a bourgeois style.

But it's a shame for society that Archigram couldn't build--the first building Peter Cook is doing will be finished soon in Berlin. I think this is one of the reason I really can't stand po-mo architects. These guys inhibit experiments because they're always importing, pretending to be very progressive, but really being very conservative. It's easy for a bourgeois client to commission an architect who seems to be very progressive and is doing a very conventional bourgeois ground plan. It's convenient and it's well known, and on the outside they're pretending to be very progressive, because they get the P/A awards.

Leon Krier supports this very bourgeois way of thinking, and he gets a lot of support from Prince Charles and every other conservative guy. He behaves like a bohemian, but walks on the safe side of society. This is not the future.

I think realizing a building is the real proof, and I can't tell whether we will succeed in all the things we try to do, but I promise that we will succeed in some.

The World According to Wolf Prix

Miguel Baltierra caught up with Wolf Prix on his latest visit to Los Angeles in early December, and questioned him about how the principles presented in last summer's "Architecture Strikes Back" symposium at the Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery apply to his work in Los Angeles. Prix discussed Coop-Himmelblau's current projects in Los Angeles, comparing them to older projects in Vienna and Paris (most notably La Ville Nouvelle de Melun-Sénart, a 1987 project for a new city plan linking three small towns outside of Paris), and his newest project, a winning competition entry for the design of a new city center for the state capital of St. Polten in Austria.

In a recent interview, you referred to Los Angeles as a "mono-functional city," one that could become multi-functional if downtown was the core with Wilshire as a force line. However, Los Angeles is actually evolving into a multiple city region. Is it not possible to say the multi-functional areas are already in place?

If you take Watts and Beverly Hills together, LA seems multi-functional, but you can't do that. It has to be within a certain distance, otherwise you could say Manhattan belongs to LA, and so on. The city is not interwoven, it's Koreatown, downtown, Brentwood, boom, boom, boom, boom. It stays mono-functional. There is no intersection, no crossing.

Connection lines need to be made between very different things. It is funny, we are thinking about doing a city plan for ourselves, how we think the touch of European eyes could develop LA. But I think we will start in very special areas like Melrose, Culver City, downtown, and Wilshire Boulevard, and look at how we can combine things without being traditional European city planners. I have no recipe right now.

You've said that you're interested in exploring what each city is about, in terms of materials, in terms of energy, volumes and space...

Also in terms of feelings...it's not an architectural approach, it's an emotional approach.

How would you compare your emotional approach to this city with that of Vienna?

One emotional approach is Guns 'N Roses, driving on the freeway, having the sun right in your eyes, driving west. You can't see on the freeway—I never have that in New York or Vienna. Having four cars beside you, driving 50, 60, 80 miles, tension trying to catch the right sign because you have to go to Culver City, or to the airport, then coming in from Europe, flying half an hour over built land, artificial nature, without having an idea of what it is. Sometimes the smog, sometimes the fog, the very quick sunset, and you notice the moving airplanes around, hanging like flying stars. That's what LA is, on one hand. On the other hand, I know everything is illusion here.

What do you find is primarily the illusion?

Everything is illusion here, everything, even the architecture. Someone was asking me, what do you like in LA. And I said, okay, I like to drive in LA because this is a kind of public place, this intersection. You have no other public place where people connect. This is so different than every other city I ever saw. You are far ahead of something we call culture, so the way it's expressed in city plan—I can't see any city plan, which is good on one hand, on the other it's bad.

Los Angeles is like a movie. People are pretending, saying "have a nice day" without thinking. It's just illusion. I believe this is the city of the future whether we like it or not. And sometimes I really don't want to touch it, because it's a kind of laboratory for how the future will work. Will it explode, will it break down?

I don't think the social problems, the drug problems are coming from the city plan. You can't change them by doing another city plan. But there is a displacement of places where you have to get everything together in your head before you start, you have to have a concept of how to drive, otherwise you are lost. We have to weave the city together in our brain.

Maybe what I'm missing here is one or two of what we call lines of power or energy, made visible like on Wilshire. Wilshire could be a little more dense in some places and that could make an impact on developing a multi-functional structure. It could provide refreshing points or crystal points in a still mono-functional city.

Then from what you're saying, there is nothing you can extrapolate from your past projects concerning Los Angeles.

No, there is no recipe. Everytime you do something, you have to think in special terms. You can't take Paris and throw it into LA. But maybe you could use pieces of Paris as a design strategy.

You mentioned in an earlier interview that you try to give a project the best of Paris, the best of Vienna.

Yes, we tried to do that in Paris, with Melun-Sénart, as a strategy for getting the things we liked the most out of Paris, Vienna, New York and LA, and combining them. Then we came out with low density and high density structures intersecting each other. The way it worked could be a point of departure.

Is anything from Melun-Sénart actually going to be realized?

In Paris, the political situation is changing because they are thinking about extending

the borderline of the city, and therefore the project is on hold.

But two weeks ago we won a city planning competition to design a plan for the city center of St. Polten, close to Vienna. We proposed the strategy of interweaving high and low density elements. This is the strategy of Himmelblau: if there is a strong element or big volume, and a small volume penetrating the big volume, we always support the small volume by making it very important in terms of structure and meaning. So then we get this floating, ambivalent feeling of design.

Basically the project is a multi-functional combination of multi-use space, ranging from single houses to high density structures like office buildings combined with leisure time functions, cultural functions, shops, etc.

The design strategy is based on the site's magnetic fields. They're supposed to be unhealthy, but no one knows for sure. The client, who is a developer, wanted us, the participant, to keep away from these lines. We talked to a lot of scientists and they told us that this stream from the magnetic fields acts like an air stream. So we did a kind of wind tunnel test. We built a box the size of this site. We made holes along this magnetic field, and we blew air beyond that, so that simulates the action of the magnetic fields, and then we threw the buildings into the box, to see what the air stream did. So our design had slanted

beams, going away from the air stream.

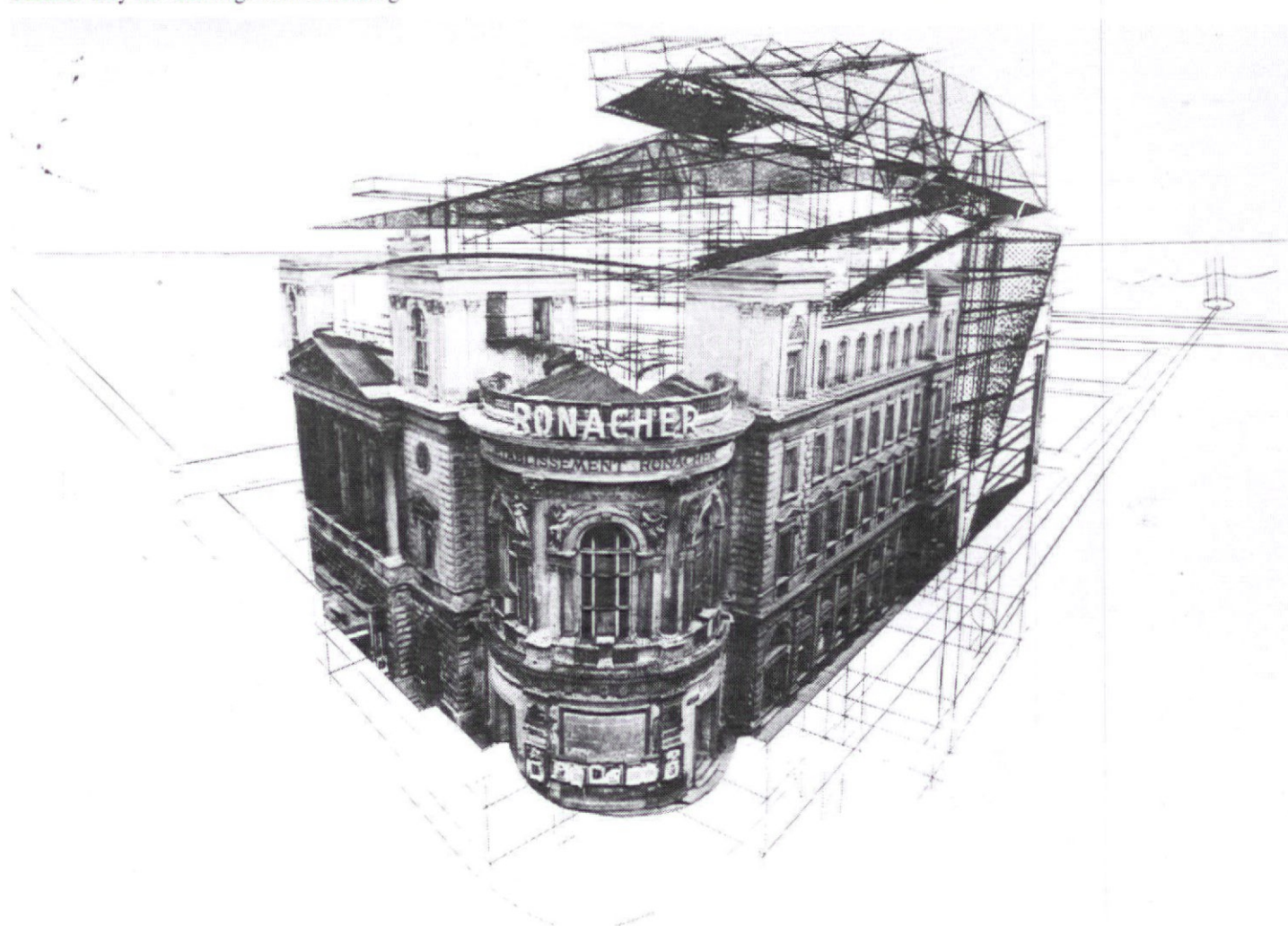
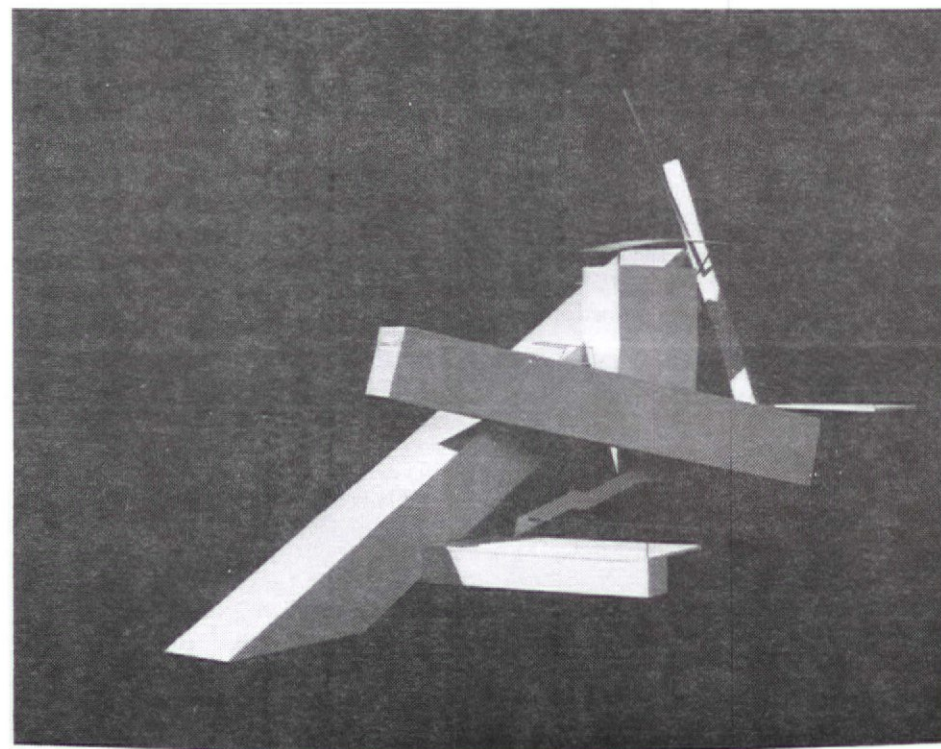
In The Power of the City book the process of design for Melun-Sénart involved the use of body language where in this case it's more about science.

Yes, but it looks very similar.

But you are still dealing with magnetic fields in both cases.

I think city planning has to do something with making invisible forces visible. The Paris project was visualized through the running of energy lines, and their positive imprint. St. Polten used the negative influence of energy lines. I think this is the way we will approach LA, finding out what's going on. It takes a while.

During the "Architecture Strikes Back" symposium, you presented a thesis that the architecture of the next century would be a reflection of the tension and complexity of today's society, but that 19th century attitudes must be eliminated first. In Los Angeles most of the history was created in the 20th century. What possibilities exist for an open architecture that does not depend upon traditional city forms such as the cities you've responded to in the past?



Profile: Ronald A. Altoon, FAIA

He studied with Louis Kahn, provided emergency architectural services to earthquake victims in Armenia and now he works in a bank. For the time being at home in a temporary office, boxed papers and drawings filling what was once a bank vault, incoming AIA/LA president Ronald A. Altoon offered *LA Architect* a tour of Altoon & Porter's new location, and some opinions on the challenges facing AIA/LA in 1991.

Recovering from a staggering financial loss incurred last summer with the demise of First Pacific Bank (approximately \$64,000), and the third administrative upheaval in a little over five years, and bracing itself for the onslaught of recession, AIA/LA looks to Altoon to provide leadership and vision in the uncertain future.

A 1968 graduate of the USC School of Architecture, Altoon received his masters degree from Columbia University in 1969. Returning to Southern California, he worked as a senior designer and urban planner for Albert C. Martin & Associates from 1969-72. He went on to serve as senior designer for Daniel L. Dworsky, FAIA Architect & Associates (1972-1973), and principal and project manager/designer for Frank O. Gehry and Associates, Inc. (1973-1976). In 1977, he began an eight year association with Charles Kober Associates, as senior vice president, principal for design, managing partner, and ultimately, president.

Altoon left CKA in 1984 to form his own firm, Altoon & Porter Architects. The firm has been responsible for numerous national projects, and has been featured in national journals such as *Architecture*, *Architectural Record*, and *Progressive Architecture*, among others.

In addition to his firm's work, Altoon received a number of awards for leading the AIA/CCAIA Armenian Earthquake Urban Design Assistance Task Force. Following the 1989 earthquake, Altoon formed a team to conduct an on-site charrette proposing strategies for rebuilding the town of Spitak, Armenia. The team returned again to facilitate the follow-up effort, and in 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic awarded Altoon a memorial medal, presented by USSR Ambassador Yuri Durbinin.

In the following interview, 1991 President Ronald A. Altoon shares his vision for the future of the AIA/LA Chapter.

On Building Political Clout in LA

We've got to get ourselves appointed in a place where our voice is a voice with authority. I will be working very hard this year with those elected officials that I have some relationship with into facilitating that, and I'll be asking others to do the same thing. We've got to get an agenda sold to our members who are well connected.

On the Perennial AIA/LA Chapter Administrative Turnover

I really would like to see it stabilize. I think we've got to look to long term interests of the chapter. I think if we can achieve the convention in 1994 successfully, we will position whoever is executive director on a platform of much greater effectiveness for lobbying in the city. I think what has been achieved in the last year, despite the recent changeover, has been a stabilizing of functions within the office. What we need to do is to determine how we want the community outreach to occur in our chapter.

On Divisions in the Design Community

I understand the "design community" to be the one with the capital "D." By necessity, that community has to alienate itself from the AIA, because the AIA is the Institute, it's the mainstream, and that community, generally speaking, does not want to be associated with the mainstream. It's a real tragedy that the design side of the profession wants to estrange itself from the rest of the profession, because there is so much capability, intelligence and strength there.

Back in the fifties, the post war era, Quincy Jones, Charles Maston, Ed Killingsworth, all those guys, they were the mainstream architects and the design architects, and they were very much aligned with the universities. There was a real camaraderie, and a real consensus in the community of what good design was, and it occurred because the leadership of the profession was in the hands of the best design people.

They generally had a speaker at the monthly board meeting. There was a lot of drinking and a lot of events, that's when drinking hard stuff was really popular, and there was this level of camaraderie in the air. I've noticed in the last eight years or so that there have been very few meetings, and very few exchanges of ideas, so that all exchange occurs in the design awards program or in the magazines.

I've felt for a long time that something needed to occur to bring the profession back to the dialogue table, and that's ultimately the reason I ran for office. I hope to begin to put a series of programs together for the coming year that deal with dialogue among architects.



On Specific Programs

One of the programs that occurred two years ago, which I thought was a terrific step in that direction, was the forum series where four architects simply sit up and have a conversation like we've had today. I'm going to try to do that again this year.

I've spent some time talking to the San Francisco Chapter, and we're going to set up a series of debates where two architects will come down and take on two of us, and then we'll go up there, and so on. So there will be four of these Mason-Dixon rivalries going on, and that's to just put a little provocation into it.

The third thing is I'd like to get a significant speaker in Architecture Week to begin a Papers on Architecture series. And then I want to have whoever the big hitter is for the design awards program to deliver a lecture while he or she is here. That way we'd at least get two lectures.

I've also asked each of the deans of the schools of architecture if they would think

about taking an evening at AIA in the effort to build back a bridge between town and gown. I guess the goals I have are to increase dialogue among architects, and facilitate a relationship between the schools and the profession.

LA Architect shares with its readers what they always wanted to know about Ron Altoon but were afraid to ask.

What would you have done if you hadn't become an architect?

If I could chart my life from its beginning I would either be a tenor in the Metropolitan Opera...

Can you sing?

Not at all.

That doesn't count then.

Or I would be conducting music somewhere.

PLANNING, continued from 1

ute to a common project that can thread throughout the entire community.

But I have other motives here. It has long been my goal to reestablish an interdependent, if not interactive, relationship between town and gown, between the schools of architecture and the profession. By involving the schools in this project, we will actively share the responsibility of posing the questions to which the future decade must respond. Those of our membership who cultivate the minds of young architects in the academic forum, and those young minds should be able to share along with the practitioner the responsibility for the eventual vision.

Running in parallel with this central theme project will be a number of opportunities for architects to meet, exchange ideas, and engage in dialogue. I would like to see two major speaker events in 1991. The first, to occur coincidental with Architecture Week, will be the first of a series of **papers on architecture** and would address the subject of design in the urban environment. The second, to be given by a distinguished member of our design awards jury, would be delivered in September coincidental with the jury itself.

There will be four **Focus on Architects** events which will be presentation/exchange forums similar to those which were established two years ago. Each of these would be focused on a theme of designing in the context of the urban situation where the presenting architects would show work relevant to the urban situation.

I have discussed with the San Francisco Chapter the concept of a series of north-

south debates on architecture, perhaps based on regional idiosyncratic theory that is clearly intended to be provocative at every level. There would be four debates: two in Southern California and two in Northern California. They should begin a dialogue across our state that should have been taking place for many years.

Finally, there will be two major social events this year. First, we propose a **Los Angeles River Festival** to take place along the river on a mid-summer night's eve. Imagine the possibilities. Second, we intend to revive an age old tradition in this community, far too long absent from the architects' list of annual events. The **Beaux Arts Ball** will be revived in early November and is intended to allow each of us to challenge the limits of self-expression.

We look forward to a very full year, one that will challenge our creative energies. The agenda for the year is intended to be inclusive, participatory, and provocative. It will require your collaboration, your criticism, and your creativity, and I encourage you to take advantage of every part of it.

We are on the cusp of a new era in Southern California. We are emerging as a world class metropolitan area. We are struggling with difficult economic times and a cumbersome political system. But we will emerge as a greater city because of the energies and the resources of those who will share their vision for our future. I look forward to sharing with you your part of that vision in 1991.

Ronald A. Altoon, FAIA
AIA/LA President



Above: design for the city of Spitak, Soviet Armenia; upper right: Engine Co. No. 28 restoration, Los Angeles, Altoon & Porter.

SALK HONORED AT PDC

As the recipient of the first annual Presidential Commemorative Award on December 13 at the Pacific Design Center, Dr. Jonas Salk spoke about his meetings with Louis Kahn to develop the Salk Institute in San Diego, describing the force that drew them together as "the logic of the magic," or fate as an architect selection process. Fielding questions from the audience, he responded to photographer Julius Shulman's query about how he would choose an architect today, considering the "terrible state of architecture," by saying that for him it was a highly personal decision determined by meeting an architect who shared his vision. He went on to speak about his work on an AIDS vaccine, and his prognosis for the future of man, commenting that in many ways we are "the victims of our success," and we must work to solve the environmental and societal problems we have created. Outgoing president Raymond L. Gaio presented him with the monumental crystal award pictured on the event invitation, commemorating his achievements as a humanitarian and visionary.

Building Small Firms

Starting February 27, the AIA/LA will sponsor a seminar conducted by Bill Truby, director and co-founder of the A & E Management Academy, on the elements that go into making a small firm successful. The course will meet five times, and will cover five essential areas: assessment of each firm's current strengths and weaknesses; team-

building and leadership training; the process of establishing a vision for each firm; the organizational work-flow process; and marketing. The course fee is \$375/member and \$500/non-members. To reserve a space, call (213) 380-4595.

Lien Law Examined

On September 30, 1990, Governor Deukmejian approved Assembly Bill No. 1789, creating a new "Design Professionals Lien" for unpaid preconstruction design, engineering and survey services. The law goes into effect January 1, 1991, and gives design professionals the right to record a mechanic's lien to collect fees from a defaulting landowner, even though no actual construction is done at the site.

On January 19, an AIA/LA seminar will address briefly the design professional's rights under existing law and will evaluate in detail the new law. The seminar will be conducted by Herb Wiedoeft, AIA, and will be held at the Department of Water and Power Auditorium, 111 North Hope Street, from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. The attendance fee is \$25/member and \$35/non-member. For more information, call (213) 380-4595.

The Search Continues

On March 15-17, at the Asilomar Conference Center, Monterey CA: "Will the Real California Architecture Please Stand Up?" will bring together over 500 architects, designers, educators, and students to explore the historic precedents, ideas and evolution of California design. Participants include: Joseph Esherick, FAIA; Peter Calthorpe, AIA; Franklin D. Israel; Witold Rybczynski; Shelly Kappe, Hon. AIA; C. James Lawler, FAIA; Jim Heimann; Sally Woodbridge; Craig Hodgetts; and Nelson Rising.

Presentation of the 1991 CCAIA design awards will be included in the conference program with a discussion by A. Eugene Kohn, FAIA, RIBA, chair of the 1991 Design Awards Committee.

Conference registration forms will be sent to all CCAIA members and professional affiliates this month. For advanced registration and further information, call (916) 448-9082.

Code Talk

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 has established design and construction requirements to provide handicapped access to multi-family dwellings, including condominiums, where first occupancy is obtained after March 13, 1991. This requirement is for buildings containing four or more dwelling units. Many such buildings being submitted for plan check or qualifying for building permits at this time may not be completed by March 13, 1991 and will be subject to the regulations.

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 makes it unlawful to discriminate in any aspect relating to the sale, rental or financing of dwellings or in the provision of brokerage services or facilities in connection with the sale or rental of a dwelling because of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 expanded coverage of Title VIII to prohibit discriminatory housing practices based on handicap and familial status. As amended, Section 804(f)(3)(c) provides that unlawful discrimination includes a failure to design and construct covered multi-family dwellings available for first occupancy on or after March 13, 1991 (30 months after the date of enactment) in accordance with certain accessibility requirements.

The Act makes it unlawful to fail to design and construct these multi-family dwellings so that (1) public use and common use portions of the dwellings are readily accessible to and usable by persons with handicaps; (2) all doors within such dwellings which are designed to allow passage into and within the premises are sufficiently wide to allow passage by persons in wheelchairs; and (3) all premises within such dwellings contain specified features of adaptive design.

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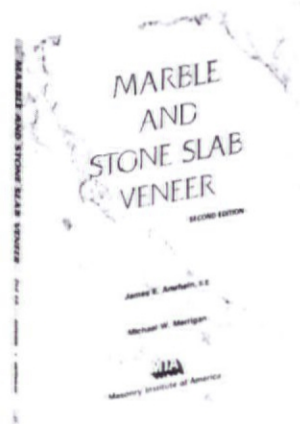
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L.A. ARCHITECT



Upcoming Events...

The **1991 Installation** of AIA/LA and associated organizations' officers and directors will be held in the grand concourse of the recently restored Union Station. The event will start with cocktails at 7 pm and dinner will follow at 8 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

The first **new member orientation** of 1991 is scheduled for January 23 at 5:30 pm at the Jerde Partnership. Call (213) 380-4595.

The **1991 Monterey Design Conference** searches for the real California architecture, March 15-17. Call (916) 448-9082.

A five-meeting course on **making small firms successful** will begin February 27, conducted by Bill Truby of A&E Management. Call (213) 380-4595.

On January 19, Herb Wiedoeft will conduct a **seminar addressing the recently signed lien law**. The seminar will be held at the DWP Auditorium, from 8:30 am-12:30 pm. Call (213) 380-4595.

Grassroots 1991 will be February 6-9 in Washington, DC. Call (213) 380-4595.

The fourth annual conference for **California Women in Environmental Design** will be held February 22-24 at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. Call (415) 548-6209.

Planning for 1991

Creativity is a solitary act. It requires deep introspection, commitment, and truth. Architecture is a communal act requiring cooperation and compromise. When each of us shares our creative energies we do so to the benefit of the built environment.

We embark now on the first year in the final decade of the second millennium. By the conclusion of this decade, our profession can fulfill its obligations to society and to itself by assuming a formative role in crafting a vision for the built environment that is environmentally conscientious, socially responsible, and culturally enlightened. It will require all our best efforts in focusing our energies to fulfill this obligation.

Look around and you will see good buildings and bad buildings, successfully conceived and achieved communities and those which appear aimless or in need. The architect's hand has been active in creating each of them. We can lay claim to notable successes, but must admit, as well, our notorious failures.

We must enter now a time of enlightenment. In this final decade we must learn more about ourselves, and take measure of the manner in which our work affects those around us. And we must offer our capabilities where we can render assistance to the community in need.

In 1991 my focus will be on design in the urban environment. The goals for this year are intended to bring the energies of this chapter together.

By the year 2000 Los Angeles will be the largest city in the United States. Will it be the greatest? Surely this must be our

goal. Well before the year 2000 the Los Angeles Chapter will be the largest in the United States. Will it serve its membership, the profession, and the community more effectively than any other? Surely this must be our charge. Can we capitalize on the pluralism that is the essence of this community? Diversity of architectural thought flourishes here. As we are a diverse culture, so are we a melting pot of ideas. There is the opportunity for a plethora of self-expression. But why work in isolation?

It is my intention to create monthly programs that will bring architect into discussion with architect; to raise the level of debate, to challenge, provoke, and encourage discussions on design. This year I envision a program of interaction among architects. I envision a year wherein our profession can present ideas, exchange views, and openly debate our different points of view.

I have proposed to the Board of Directors and to our committee chairs that we embark on a common project this year—the **Los Angeles River**. Most of us know this as a Corps of Engineers flood control channel. But for those of us who grew up in Los Angeles, it was a natural and recreational resource. I propose that we embark on a year long study of the Los Angeles River. This natural element that weaves its way through many of our communities, many of the cities that we serve, many of the political and cultural districts, can become a resource for all of us, given a vision and a solid commitment by our profession, our allied professions, community groups, and the political establishment.

I propose that the chapter, led by its Urban Design Committee, and calling upon the resources of many of the other committees, begin a major analysis of the river.

In This Issue...

Each year the incoming president is invited to outline his plans and visions for the coming year in the January issue of LA Architect. In the adjacent message to the membership, 1991 President Ronald A. Altoon previews coming AIA/LA activities. On page 8, LA Architect continues the discussion with Altoon, profiling his background, and posing further questions about his aspirations for AIA/LA.

On page 3, Miguel Baltierra (LA Architect's erstwhile Arts Editor, newly returned from Harvard GSD) interviews architect-about-town Wolf Prix.

Finally, from page 5 onward LA Architect dissects the proposed Landscape and Hillside Ordinances, offering an overview of how they will affect both architects' practices and the state of the environment. The accompanying photo feature invites reader's opinions on already built hillside projects observed in and around LA.

Working in concert with community groups, the government, and the schools of architecture within our chapter area, we should study the river, and its various environs, and produce a white paper which poses questions and presents opportunities so that our community can visualize the full potential of this resource. I have spoken to the Deans of the schools of architecture, to representatives of federal, state, county, and local government, officers and committee chairs and many members of our chapter. Each has responded with interest to contrib-

Continued on 3